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# CITY OF YUKON COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS REPORT





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## INTRODUCTION

The City of Yukon engaged Candor to facilitate and moderate three Community Conversations with residents. The sessions were designed to attract a cross-section of community members and to provide qualitative information to inform quantitative results from a survey of residents.

Two sessions were held on a weekday evening (Sept. 28 and Oct. 21), and one was held on

a Saturday morning (Oct. 9). The schedule was planned to allow for a wide variety of community members to attend. (See Appendix A for more details on the sessions.)

Our goal was to determine how people feel about current city offerings and services, what potential improvements/upgrades they would favor, and general attitudes about funding.





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although the groups at the three sessions represented a broad range of ages and life situations – from high school students to seniors, and from young families to retirees – the results were remarkably consistent. Overall:

- **Attendees are very happy to live in Yukon**, and do not want to see drastic change in the community; however, they desire signs of progress and increased efficiency
- **Residents are very concerned about lack of maintenance or improvement in infrastructure**
  - This includes road conditions (including signage/markings), water quality and cost, traffic control and stormwater management
  - They do not feel improvements are implemented quickly
- Residents are frustrated by increased auto traffic caused by new commercial development, especially “south of 10th,” which they generally feel adds congestion without benefitting city finances
  - Some admitted they appreciate the increased convenience of new retail/restaurant options
  - There was also concern related to traffic control issues stemming from the Christmas lights traffic
- Attendees understand the challenges of being a “land-locked” city
- Even when asked to ignore potential costs and to think of dream projects for the city, residents struggled to suggest options
- Residents agree Yukon would benefit from additional options for entertainment and dining
  - Frequent mentions about the diverse offerings found in Mustang and neighboring cities were discussed
    - › Occasionally, there was discussion that Yukon residents had to travel outside of city limits to enjoy activities
    - › The concern primarily hinged on the fact that Yukon residents were putting money into other cities as opposed to keeping it at home
    - › Many people expressed concerns about people from other municipalities (especially Oklahoma City) coming to the city without contributing

- Current residents believe the school district is a draw, but are frustrated or confused about whether this benefits the city itself
- **On the topic of taxation, the main point communicated was that residents would potentially support an increase as long as:**
  - Infrastructure improvements are prioritized
  - The plan for tax utilization is extremely detailed, well communicated and has an expiration date
- Related to communication, residents expressed that it was difficult to learn about city initiatives and/or give an opinion outside of council meetings
  - They expressed a desire to receive more frequent communication about initiatives, measures and other happenings through a city-backed platform

Perhaps the overall sentiment can be summed up by one participant who enjoys his children using the same parks/fields he used, but he also wants to see them improved for today's children and the future.

**In short, residents want improvements, progress and vision for the city they choose to reside in.**

## NOTE:

Candor noted few people of color attended the sessions. While we are not aware of the full demographics of Yukon's population, this may indicate people from some ethnic/minority groups do not feel welcome in community conversations. This could also affect the outcome of elections.





## FINDINGS

According to feedback from the Community Conversations, the City of Yukon's best chance to get voter approval on new funding for community projects is to:

- Craft a measure with very clear and specific goals and uses for additional funds
  - Residents are very concerned about access to water (and costs); including water infrastructure in the measure may increase initial support
- Provide a strict timeline (i.e. a temporary tax)

Residents feel a sales tax would be the fairest way to fund projects, especially because non-residents will cover part of the burden.

Even participants who understand previous difficulty passing revenue-raising measures said they believe residents will support a properly designed measure.

The conversations also made clear residents feel improvements could be made in how the city informs residents about available programs and amenities, as well as how it promotes electoral issues.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Candor offers these recommendations, based on what we learned during these sessions:

- Determine the main distribution channels and media outlets used by residents to receive information from Yukon
- Leverage key voices in the community to distribute information; create ambassadors
- Establish a robust communications and advertising strategy for critical initiatives/campaign, including securing a local mechanism to engage a communications agency with experience in local elections

- After the ballot measure is crafted, conduct regular information gathering sessions (i.e. town hall meetings) to ensure voters receive correct information directly from the city, rather than misinformation from opponents
  - Note: We do not recommend an additional session to gather information; overall sentiments seemed very consistent throughout the three sessions





# APPENDIX A : SESSION NOTES

## SESSION 1

Tuesday, Sept. 28, 7 p.m.

Dale Robertson Center

Approximately 20 people attended this session, though it also included several members of city staff, the mayor and approximately 10 high school students. Although the students attended to earn class credit, they were active participants in the conversation.

### Current Situation/General Impressions

Overall, people who attended this session feel positive about the state of the city. While they may have ideas for improving quality of life, we did not hear expressions indicating a widespread belief the city is on the wrong path or poorly operated.

Nearly all seem to understand and value recent growth in the city, though some participants expressed worry about the city being at risk of standing still and not growing.

Participants frequently cited the need to maintain/upgrade infrastructure such as city streets (which came up frequently), the senior/events center and the library.

There was no clear contingent in support of major projects such as a large sports complex, though there was positive sentiment for the potential of a new library/senior center/events facilities. Most often, people were concerned about the condition of city streets, which are universally believed to be poor.

Participants generally agreed they sense a lack of activities, especially for adolescents. They felt young children and seniors have options, but not those in between. On further questioning, most indicated additional programming at existing parks and facilities could do much to alleviate these concerns of lack of activities. These individuals also expressed an interest in having more entertainment options and independently owned food options.

Additionally, some participants expressed Yukon lacks a sense of culture or a distinct identity. They said they felt like Yukon could be "any other suburb." They were comfortable with the city spending more on marketing to set itself apart from other cities.

One clear idea was presented: A dog park within city limits.

### Funding

Overall, participants understand the city may require additional revenue to fund maintenance and improvements. There was no vocal objection to the idea of a voter-approved sales-tax increase, as long as it is limited in time and has a clear scope. Participants said they value having people who do not live in Yukon share some of the financial burden for the services/amenities they use.

Generally, they do not favor an increase in property taxes.

Residents were aware there will always be a segment of the electorate which will vote no on any additional funding for the city. They believe educating the rest of the public about the purpose, value and importance of these elections would be crucial to win approval.



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## SESSION 2

Saturday, Oct. 9, 10 a.m.

Yukon Community Center

Five participants attended this Saturday morning session. Attendance may have been lower because this was scheduled for the hour immediately before the OU/Texas football game.

Participants in Session 2 were very strongly focused on core city issues. They spoke frequently about issues such as road/sign maintenance, flood control (with very specific concerns about certain areas) and traffic problems caused by the new commercial developments "south of 10th." Some participants seemed unaware – and unconcerned – about the sales tax implications of those properties being on Oklahoma City land. They also appreciate the convenience of having more shopping options than in the past.

The residents are overall very happy with the state of affairs in Yukon. They believe Yukon offers plenty of activities, they value living in a family-friendly community and they do not see the need for large-scale city investment in amenities. Their focus is on maintaining quality of life. This includes proper maintenance of roads and floodwater systems, but they also acknowledge many of these things may be operational issues. For example, one resident found it easy to report problems, but did not feel they were quickly fixed.

The same resident also worried about wasted time/resources to set up Christmas Lights and for other festivals, though others did not share this view. (And even the participant who made the comment appreciated the festival, he just thought it had grown too big.)

Once again, residents raised concerns over the long-term prospects of the water system, and the agreement with Oklahoma City. (It should be noted the main advocate for this area is a former member of City Council.)

Although residents do not have a large wishlist for major projects, they understand the city may need additional funds to improve operations and to maintain/upgrade infrastructure. The group had a strong preference for sales tax as a mechanism, because they feel many of the "issues" faced in the city are caused by non-residents, and a sales tax is a fair way to ensure they contribute.

Additionally, they believe a clearly communicated plan, with a fixed duration and specific, transparent goals could pass, though it would require a strong effort to ensure voters know exactly what they are getting. They are familiar with the MAPS model in Oklahoma City, and understand its benefits.





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## SESSION 3

Thursday, Oct. 21, 7 p.m.

Jackie Cooper Gym

Approximately 30 people attended this session, which included the liveliest and most engaged discussion of the three sessions. We believe attendance was highest for this session because of local media coverage of the previous events. One group of three people at this session stayed silent even when asked to participate.

This group of participants were the most vocal, and they expressed a passion for Yukon early in the session. However, they mentioned being frustrated by the lack of progress and improvements to basic infrastructure. Many of the participants were concerned about parks, streets and facilities being in the same condition as they experienced when they were adolescents.

Some wondered if the funds Yukon receives through taxation were being handled or distributed appropriately, since it wasn't apparent the city's basic infrastructure was properly attended to. However, none were able to express particular areas in which they perceived excessive or improper spending.

Some residents expressed a preference to avoid growth. One participant stated it as, "Don't Edmond my Yukon." The overall sentiment seemed to be an understanding some change and new development is good, but the city must take care to manage the consequences of growth.

For instance, they were in favor of growth as long as the generated revenue benefits Yukon directly as opposed to funneling money to Oklahoma City. By the end of the discussion on this topic, growth was considered a positive as long as city leadership had the vision to factor in decreasing burdens of growth: environmental challenges impacting water availability, continuing to provide improvements like the sports complex and other activity-based operations and innovating to compete with neighboring cities.

On the topic of taxation, most participants expressed some reticence to a blanket tax with limited information provided by Yukon. However, they were mindful of improvements requiring dollars and favored a MAPS-style model of implementation. The appeal to approving a tax increase ultimately won out with the following caveat: the plan needs to be meticulously detailed, include accountability metrics, and widely and properly communicated outcomes.

Many participants indicated they weren't aware of the best ways to learn about Yukon happenings outside of the paper and social pages developed by residents. There were also several calls for regular community sessions to allow for resident input.